

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

MARCO VERCH,

Plaintiff,

- against -

DUETTO RESEARCH, INC.

Defendant.

Docket No. 3:19-cv-5099

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Marco Verch (“Verch” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant Duetto Research, Inc. (“Duetto Research” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

**NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act and for the removal and/or alteration of copyright management information under Section 1202(b) of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph of the Las Vegas strip, owned and registered by Verch, a professional photographer. Accordingly, Verch seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. Upon information and belief, this Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides and/or transacts business in California and is registered with the California Department of State Division of Corporations.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

### **PARTIES**

5. Verch is a professional photographer in the business of licensing his photographs to online and print media for a fee having a usual place of business at Eupener Str. 55f 50933 Germany.

6. Upon information and belief, Duetto Research is a foreign business corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, with a place of business at 250 Sutter Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, California 94108. Upon information and belief, Duetto Research is registered with the California State Department of Corporations to do business in California. At all times material hereto, Duetto Research has owned and operated a website the URL: [www.DuettoCloud.com](http://www.DuettoCloud.com) (the “Website”).

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

#### **A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph**

7. Verch photographed the Las Vegas Strip (the “Photograph”). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8. Verch is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

9. The Photograph was registered with United States Copyright Office and was given Copyright Registration Number VA 2-095-199.

#### **B. Defendant’s Infringing Activities**

10. Duetto Research ran an article on the Website entitled *6 Hotel SEO Strategies to Attract and Convert Direct Business*. The article featured the Photograph. A screenshot of the Photograph on the Website is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

11. Duetto Research did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its article, nor did Duetto Research have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

**FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF**  
**(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST DEFENDANT)**  
**(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)**

12. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-11 above.

13. Duetto Research infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. Duetto Research is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

14. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

15. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by Duetto Research have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

16. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and Defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.

**SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF**  
**INTEGRITY OF COPYRIGHT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AGAINST**  
**DEFENDANT**  
**(17 U.S.C. § 1202)**

17. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-16 above.

18. Upon information and belief, Duetto Research copied the Photograph from Plaintiff's Flickr page which contained a credit to March Verch. See Exhibit C.

19. Upon information and belief, Duetto Research intentionally and knowingly removed copyright management information identifying Plaintiff as the photographer of the Photograph.

20. The conduct of Duetto Research violates 17 U.S.C. § 1202(b).

21. Upon information and belief, Duetto Research's falsification, removal and/or alteration of the aforementioned copyright management information was made without the knowledge or consent of Plaintiff.

22. Upon information and belief, the falsification, alteration and/or removal of said copyright management information was made by Duetto Research intentionally, knowingly and with the intent to induce, enable, facilitate, or conceal their infringement of Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph. Duetto Research also knew, or should have known, that such falsification, alteration and/or removal of said copyright management information would induce, enable, facilitate, or conceal their infringement of Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph.

23. As a result of the wrongful conduct of Duetto Research as alleged herein, Plaintiff is entitled to recover from Duetto Research the damages, that he sustained and will sustain, and

any gains, profits and advantages obtained by Duetto Research because of their violations of 17 U.S.C. § 1202, including attorney's fees and costs.

24. Alternatively, Plaintiff may elect to recover from Duetto Research statutory damages pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(c) (3) in a sum of at least \$2,500 up to \$25,000 for each violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1202.

### **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Duetto Research be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. The Defendant Mark Hotel be adjudged to have falsified, removed and/or altered copyright management information in violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1202.
3. That Plaintiff be awarded Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photographs;
4. That, with regard to the Second Claim for Relief, Plaintiff be awarded either:
  - a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's falsification, removal and/or alteration of copyright management information; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of at least \$2,500 and up to \$ 25,000 for each instance of false copyright management information and/or removal or alteration of copyright management information committed by Defendant pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(c);
5. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;

6. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorneys' fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(b);
7. That Plaintiff be awarded punitive damages for copyright infringement;
8. That Plaintiff be awarded attorney's fees and costs;
9. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
10. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York  
August 17, 2019

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